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Historical Address

Rhode Island Light Artillery

1801-1874



In the

Civil and Spanish Wars

By George B. Peck, M. D.

HISTORICAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

Dedication of the Memorial Tablet

ON THE ARSENAL

BENEFIT STREET, CORNER OF MEETING

PROVIDENCE, R. I.

THURSDAY, JULY 19, 1917



GEORGE B. PECK, M. D.

Adjutant Veteran Association, P. M. C. A.

Late Lieutenant 2d Regt. R. I. Vols.

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PROVIDENCE MARINE CORPS
OF ARTILLERY

CHARTERED 1801.

MOTHER OF THE RHODE ISLAND BATTERIES.

FROM THIS ARMORY THERE WENT FOR SERVICE AT THE
FRONT DURING THE WAR FOR THE UNION 1861-1865.

FIRST BATTERY.

CAPTAIN CHARLES H. TOMPKINS
BATTERY A CAPTAIN WILLIAM H. REYNOLDS
BATTERY B CAPTAIN THOMAS F. VAUGHAN
BATTERY C CAPTAIN WILLIAM B. WEEDEN
BATTERY D CAPTAIN JOHN ALBERT MUNROE
BATTERY E CAPTAIN GEORGE E. RANDOLPH
BATTERY F CAPTAIN JAMES BELGER
BATTERY G CAPTAIN CHARLES D. OWEN
BATTERY H CAPTAIN JEFFREY HAZARD

TENTH BATTERY.

CAPTAIN EDWIN C. GALLUP

OFFICERS 96

ENLISTED MEN 2277

KILLED WOUNDED AND MISSING 17 KILLED WOUNDED AND MISSING 362

IN THE WAR WITH SPAIN, 1898.

BATTERY A

CAPTAIN EDGAR R. BARKER

OFFICERS 4

ENLISTED MEN 106

THIS TABLET IS PLACED BY THE VETERAN ASSOCIATION

P. M. C. A.

1917

HISTORICAL ADDRESS

Delivered July 19, 1917, at the

DEDICATION OF THE MEMORIAL TABLET ON THE ARSENAL,

Benefit Street, corner of Meeting, Providence, R. I.

Presumably at this very instant stands on the firing line, “somewhere in France,” cousins at once and allies, fighting their battles and ours, two regiments, whose fame for more than two centuries has been conspicuously and indissolubly entwined with that of Britain—the Black Watch and the Coldstream Guards. The former, sometimes known as the 42d Highlanders, at Fontenoy, May 11, 1745, like the Rhode Island troops at the first Bull Run, lost all but honor; the latter assisted in placing Charles II on his father’s throne. Passing unnoticed the services of these, the oldest of Scotia’s and of England’s troops, in the 18th century and merely observing that in the 19th both were at Waterloo where the Coldstreams

won imperishable glory by their stubborn defence of the Chateau Hougomont, that *both* were in the Crimea and also in India during the Sepoy mutiny where the Black Watch secured immortality at the relief of Lucknow, I ask how *must* the crippled veterans of these regiments in Chelsea hospital, and those less disabled scattered throughout the United Kingdom, regard the banners under which they fought, how esteem the striplings, their successors, who have assumed the burdens *they* have been *compelled* to lay aside?

Identical are the sentiments that prompted the Marine Artillery Veteran Association to erect the tablet we have met to dedicate; identical the interest and the love cherished toward those about to enter a conflict from whose pleasures and perils and honors we alas are debarred by the infirmities of age. The Providence Marine Corps of Artillery, now in its 117th year, is the oldest military organization in this county. It assisted in throwing up fortifications for the defence of the town in the war of 1812, in quelling the Dorr Insurrection in 1842, and in crushing the greater rebellion of 1861-5; was mustered into the United States service for a third time in 1898, and is now prepared to cross the broad ocean to assist in preserving the liberties of the human race. In the intervals of peace it has supported and strengthened the national government by sending to the Senate Chamber for

five successive terms, at a critical period of our history, Henry Bowen Anthony, journalist, orator and ex-governor, and later William Sprague; the State by placing in the gubernatorial chair Henry Lippitt, Henry Howard, Royal C. Taft, and the younger Elisha Dyer, and upon the Supreme Bench as Chief Justice that sterling Quaker, William Read Staples; the city by bestowing its mayoralty for 18 years on Thomas Arthur Doyle. The Marine Artillery was a *power* in the land in those days! It has elevated the character of our citizens through the influence and example of that scholar and scientist John R. Bartlett, for long years Secretary of State, of that charming poet Albert G. Greene, of that eloquent advocate Benjamin F. Thurston, of that delightful artist Augustus Hoppin, of that soulful musician Eben A. Kelly and of those church pillars James H. Read, Benjamin H. Gladding and Charles F. Wilcox. It has cared for their material interests through the inventions of William A. Harris, the administrative skill of George H. Smith first superintendent of city railways, and the business acumen of Cyrus B. Manchester, Cyrus Taft, Tully D. Bowen, William T. Dorrance, Rufus Waterman and Henry T. Beckwith. Representing these men and countless others of equal worth though less publicly known and as surviving comrades of the quasi-military duty pertinent to their day and generation, we the Veteran Association, P. M. C. A.,

have assembled this day to pay our last tribute of respect to those who, counting not their life dear unto them, passed out through yon portals prepared to sacrifice their all for honor, country, God!

To many the crash of rebel shot and shell against the walls of Sumter, April 12, 1861, was as the crackling of thunderbolts in a clear sky. Yet all had not been sleeping. Governor Sprague, direct from Magenta and Solferino, had scented the battle from afar and had prepared for the conflict so far as circumstances permitted. In less than 72 hours after Lincoln had called for 75,000 volunteers for three months service the Marine Artillery as First Battery and numbering 145 officers and men was on its way to the front with complete equipment and carriages freshly painted. At Easton, Pa., it exchanged its six smoothbore pieces for an equal number of James rifled cannon, a Rhode Island invention, thus becoming not only the first volunteer but the first rifled battery in United States forces. Captain Tompkins, tall, erect, blond, fully bearded and barely 27 years, perfectly embodied boyhood's ideal; his subsequent rapid promotion to the colonelcy of the three year regiment with the successful maintenance of his position for more than two years as Chief of Artillery of the Sixth Army Corps, often designated Sheridan's Heavy Cavalry, not less than the brevet of Brigadier for services before Richmond and in the Shenandoah vindicated the

judgment. The chances of war limited the Battery's service to marching and outpost duty, having once only the opportunity of tossing a few shells into the enemy's wood. Sixty-three of its enlisted men re-entered the service, nine of whom won commissions.

May 24, 1862, Governor Sprague received a telegram requesting him to send *at once* all available troops to Washington to repel a threatened attack by Stonewall Jackson. The state, like the national government, was totally unprepared. Edwin C. Gallup, a sergeant in the First Battery, chanced to be at the head of our active corps. Not until the 29th did the first detachment of 96 men leave, reinforced at Washington June 6th by 40 men and on the 9th by 25 more. Not until the 14th did it receive its armament, six 12-pounders. With the exception of a tramp to Cloud's Mills, Va., to participate in an advance to Richmond by the Great Unready that never materialized, the Tenth Battery spent its three months of service in camp near Tenallytown, D. C., where its drills were one of the recognized sights of the Capital. Captain Gallup was a gentleman in the technical sense of the term and elegantly entertained his numerous guests while his next in command conducted the evolutions. Six of the enlisted men had served in the First Battery and 28 re-entered the service in various organizations.

Battery A, First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery,

was mustered into service June 6, 1861. Its fame rests not less upon its conduct on the battlefield than on the number of its enlisted men that rose to responsible positions. First Sergeant George E. Randolph became Chief of Artillery of the 3d Army Corps; 5th Line Sergeant Charles D. Owen, Captain of Battery G; Corporal T. Frederic Brown, Captain of Battery B, serving through the entire war despite a severe wound at Gettysburg; and Private Elmer L. Corthell, eventually one of the *world's* eminent civil engineers, Captain of Battery D; Sergeant William H. Walcott became a Captain in the 17th U. S. Infantry, lost a leg at Gettysburg, and yet remained on duty until January 7, 1865, when he was retired, receiving the brevets of Lt. Col. and Col., U. S. A., subsequently. Of the corporals, William A. Sabin became Captain in the 3d Heavy Artillery; Harry C. Cushing, Captain and Brevet Major in the 4th U.S. Artillery, commanding for long years the light battery at Fort Adams; while Charles H. Clark, G. Lyman Dwight and George W. Field won regimental first lieutenancies. Sergeants Henry Newton and Francis A. Smith secured second lieutenancies. First Lieutenant John Albert Monroe organized and drilled the battery and through the instruction and inspiration given insured the reputation of Rhode Island Light Artillery. Noting that Clark had graduated from the English High School but two years before, Owen but

one year, and that Monroe and Dwight and Cushing (all my classmates) and Brown and Corthell had left college for the service, and that with a possible single exception all were beardless at a time when it was *unfashionable* for men to shave, you can readily form a pretty correct idea of the "Boys of '61." In view of his subsequent brilliant record I am constrained to add that Brown then possessed the most exquisite complexion I ever saw in man. His delicately pink cheeks, graceful carriage and refined manner were perfectly maidenly! Expected now but not then these men exhibited the utmost coolness at their baptism of fire, Cushing and Dwight quoting from the poets as changing scenes suggested while the latter ventured to call Monroe's attention to the beauty thereof but *he* had too many responsibilities to think on such matters. Eight weeks later Captain William H. Reynolds was Lieutenant Colonel of the regiment. The battery was engaged in a dozen pitched battles, has 279 names on its roll and lost 13 killed, 64 wounded. It was mustered out June 18, 1864. Fifty men who had re-enlisted or enlisted to make good losses by disease were transferred to Battery B.

That battery had been mustered into service August 13, 1861. Four months later Capt. Thomas F. Vaughn resigned. At one time Major and Brevet Brigardier General John G. Hazard, Chief of Artillery of the 2d

Army Corps and later Colonel of the 5th U. S. Vet. Vol. Infantry, was likewise its Captain. Battery B was mustered out June 12, 1865, having served three years and ten months. Three hundred and seventy-six were enrolled; it lost 12 killed, 44 wounded and two missing. Nineteen engagements were ordered to be inscribed on its colors, among them Gettysburg where 7 men were killed, 35 wounded, 65 horses killed or wounded, 5 guns rendered useless by rapidity and duration of fire, while the 6th, quite as effectually disabled, now reposes in our State House; Spottsylvania, where it was planted 150 yards from the rebel rifle pits and when the assault was made a section (platoon in modern parlance) accompanied the advancing line to the breastworks and fired over them at the Bloody Angle, the first time a battery was ever ordered to charge; also Ream's Station, where it was well-nigh annihilated, losing 4 killed, 52 wounded, 4 guns and caissons and 61 horses.

Battery C, Capt. William B. Weeden, was mustered August 25, 1861, and merged with Battery G, December 23, 1864, 44 of the original members having returned home August 27. Its roll bears 225 names; 16 were killed, 26 wounded and 2 reported missing. Eighteen battles are inscribed on its colors, among them the Second Bull Run where it expended 600 rounds of shell and case, and Shepardstown where about 500 more were consumed.

Battery D was in the service from September 4, 1861, until July 17, 1865. Two hundred and seventy men were enrolled during that period. Of this number 6 were killed and 25 wounded with 5 reported missing at Antietam. There, thrown by Hooker 200 yards in advance of the line of battle it absolutely squelched a rebel battery enfilading our lines, compelling its survivors to abandon their pieces *in situ*. In turn, however, it was forced to fall back by the flank fire of riflemen that had crept into easy range and killed on a single piece every horse but one and killed or wounded every man save the gunner and one cannoneer. All its pieces were brought in although 56 horses had been killed. At the Second Bull Run, when protecting our left flank with a number of other batteries, the Rebs issuing suddenly from a wood made a charge in force. On their near approach, the first support, though well protected by the sunken road it was occupying, broke and ran like a flock of sheep, as did the second line in rear of the batteries. The artillerymen followed their example, all but Monroe's men who continued hurling cannister until the Johnnies could almost lay their hands upon the pieces. Then he gave the order, "Limber to the rear, caissons left about," which was executed with accuracy and promptness, so that, to the amazement of all others, the guns were literally *snaked* from out the enemy's grasp. When a distance of some 300 yards had been gained in

the retreat, "Action rear," was ordered, and again his guns were doing effective work. A second time the battery limbered up at the last moment only again to unlimber at the proper distance. At that moment Monroe was informed that only a few rounds of solid shot were remaining so he reluctantly retired from the field. Every other gun on that flank was lost! The evident value of their previous severe drills shut the mouths of the most complaining. Afterward Monroe organized and successfully conducted for nearly a year the School for Artillery at Washington, later serving as Chief of Artillery to the 2d and 9th Corps successively. He attained the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and a commission of Brigadier General was made out for him and signed, but was withheld because he would not even *postpone* his marriage to an Alexandria belle. When nine picked regiments from Longstreet's Corps assaulted Fort Saunders, at Knoxville, November 29, 1863, Sergeant Charles C. Gray, long our State Auditor, rendered such conspicuously valuable service that Burnside directed his captain to recommend him for a lieutenancy.

Randolph's Battery E, was mustered in September 30, 1861, and out June 14, 1865. Three hundred and fifty-five men were identified with it, of whom 12 were killed and 32 wounded. Twelve battles were ordered inscribed on its colors. In the afternoon and evening of June 1,

1864, it fired 675 rounds at Cold Harbor, and previously (May 10) 530 rounds at Spottsylvania Court House. Moreover, on June 17, it fired the *first shots* into Petersburg. Its captain during the last eight months of his army life was Chief of Artillery of the 3d Corps, General Sickles, who held him in the very highest esteem.

Battery F, sometimes designated The Class in Geography because of the multiplicity of its wanderings, howbeit they were confined to two hostile States, served from October 29, 1861, to June 27, 1865. It was a part of Burnside's Coast Division, a semi-naval force, was knocked about on shipboard during the storm off Hatteras that caused serious disaster to the expedition and great anxiety to friends at home, twice landed its battery from vessels by throwing the horses overboard and towing them ashore by small boats and rafting the guns and other property to the land, made numerous raids by land and by water in the Department of North Carolina, served as cavalry for several weeks after the capture of New Berne and made a reputation of which it was justly proud, considerably inside a year. Its subsequent history is practically an intensified repetition. It enrolled 297 men, of whom 10 were killed and 26 wounded. Capt. James Belger had spent most of the preceding ten years as First Sergeant of Magruder's Light Battery in Texas and in Fort Adams. He possessed *all* the excellencies of the old time Regular including the

ability to carry an indefinite amount of whisky without betraying the fact.

Capt. Owen had but attained the age of 19 years, 2 months, 5 days, when appointed to the command of Battery G. Two hundred and eighty-seven men were enrolled, of whom 8 were killed and 49 wounded. Fifteen engagements were ordered inscribed on its guidon. Seventeen men received special Congressional Medals of Honor for accompanying the 6th Corps when it pierced the rebel lines on the morning of April 2, 1865, and turning the enemy's guns upon themselves. That any unusual courage, hazard or skill was involved in this affair is, however, not apparent. Nevertheless its conception contributed largely to the securing of the brevet of Colonel for George W. Adams, then Captain commanding. The Battery served from December 2, 1861, to June 24, 1865.

Most severely of all did Battery H suffer from the evils of the volunteer system and the co-existent curse, bounty jumping. Had the extreme penalty for desertion been rigorously inflicted, not only the State and National treasuries but the general service would have benefitted immeasurably. As it was, although 319 names appear on its roll, in March, 1863, a detail of half a hundred or more was made from a Vermont brigade to fill its ranks. When the terms of 40 of these men expired near midsummer, Jeffrey Hazard, who had made a brilliant record

in Battery A, and was a typical Christian soldier and gentleman, threw up his captaincy in despair of seeing any more real service, for though its wanderings were many and devious it participated in but two battles, the assault on Petersburg and Sailor's Creek. It was then under the command of Crawford Allen, Jr., whose richly gold-embroidered sleeves rendered him well known to the army at large. Its losses were two killed and seven wounded. Its period of service was from October 14, 1862, to June 28, 1865.

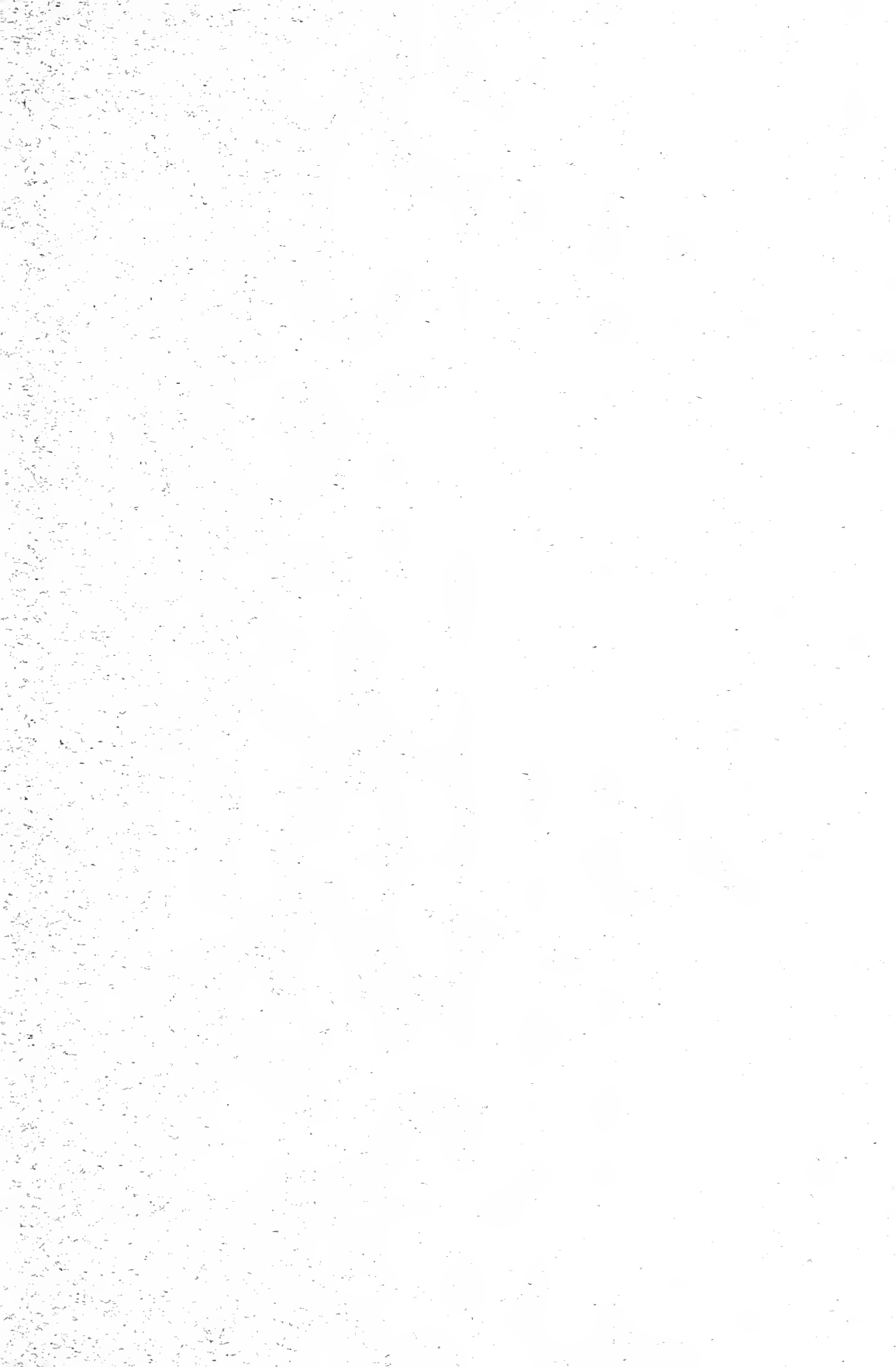
Barring three days, exactly 33 years after the collapse of the Great Rebellion, consequent upon the surrender of Joe Johnson to William Tecumseh Sherman, William McKinley, at the earlier date Captain and Brevet Major of the 23d Ohio, but at the latter President of the United States, called for 125,000 volunteers to oust Spanish forces from Cuba and the Cuban waters. On the second subsequent evening, April 25, 1898, it chancing to be the annual meeting of the Marine Artillery, it was unanimously voted that the Corps as Battery A, Brigade Rhode Island Militia, tender its services to the Governor for foreign duty. The offer was not accepted until May 27. On June 8, under command of Captain Edgar R. Barker, it left this building for Quonset Point numbering 162 officers and men. During the entire interval the officers exerted themselves to the limit preparing the Battery for

service, drilling it in relays the last two weeks day and night uninterruptedly. On June 15, it reported 205 present and fit for duty. Under date of June 18, the Governor was advised only 110 persons could be mustered in and accordingly nearly a hundred men were returned to their homes. Most of these at once sought adventure in the Regular service. On June 25, the Battery was mustered into the United States service for two years or the war as Light Battery A, 1st Artillery, Rhode Island Volunteers. It was mustered out October 26, 1898, never having left camp. No more exasperating, nerve racking duty is required of any soldier than watching others hurled into a fray from which himself is debarred. None can understand the embittering effect unless he has experienced it. Twenty-five per cent. of these men, however, did not propose to be despoiled of their fun, but joining the Regular army and navy visited the Phillipines, one at least pushing on to Pekin at the time of the Boxer uprising.

Comrades of the Olive Drab! I have outlined as briefly as possible the record of your comrades of the red cord of the elder days, comrades *all* in that alike we have sworn to obey the orders of our superiors, *irrespective*. Some of the survivors I see before me. Doubt not that they will follow your footsteps with the closest attention. *Beat* their record if you *can*! Personally I congratulate you

on the branch of the service you have selected. Preferable as was the light artillery half a century ago far more to be desired is the field artillery of today. I congratulate you upon the perfection of the armament with which you have been and will be supplied. I congratulate you upon your officers who have already proved themselves men you may trust. I congratulate you in that you will presumably defend on foreign soil your mothers and your children, your wives and your sweethearts, your homes, your all, thereby preserving them from the horrors of Belgium and France, of Poland and of Servia, and of Roumania. Especially do I congratulate you in that you will take part in overthrowing a slavery as debasing and as cruel as any that ever existed; as debasing in that it enchained not only body but mind and soul; as cruel in that it is more refined. On a certain occasion a General, addressing the Coldstream Guards, expressed the hope they would do their best. A common soldier, angered by the possibly implied innuendo, exclaimed, "You know we will do our best!" With equal confidence I affirm in this presence I *know* you will do *your best!* You *dare* not do otherwise! This is the first time the Veteran Association, Providence Marine Corps of Artillery, as a unit, has met you; it may be the last. Certainly, as individuals, we will not *all* meet. Whithersoever your footsteps are directed some will succumb to disease. *More* sure it is a number of *us* will be missing on your return, for many

are living on borrowed time. It, therefore, remaineth
for me but to salute you each as an individual—Comrade,
Hail! Farewell! and if forever, still *forever*, fare thee
well!



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